A PROPOSAL MERELY

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My country is near the Pole, so that snow is common, as are rocks and ponds, and showery rivers, and a few trees that sprout from under a snow-pack and stretch to be tremendous—spruce and fir, birch, poplar and pine.

Glaciers laid those rivers over rocks which the same glaciers shoved south and split, so that flowing water bumps and stumbles nowadays. Where the ponds and lakes are, the glaciers scooped the country or else died and the vast left-overs stayed on the site. The rocks have hollows or thin scars which the glaciers raked in passing. At home I can think about ice as tall as a town and wide as a boulevard; about rocks shifting and stacking, shining bare, and about later ice made with rain and seasonal cold, clutching those rocks that the juice of volcanoes hardened to build much earlier. I switch to the cracks that happened because of the coldness and the heat, the water and ice and even the wind, and to the sand made by water crumbling sharp rock lips where a break by a gale or a tilt of earth pulled two rocks apart, and I think further to small live cells, spores come out of another country on one of the winds. I know that the spores fell into the cracks of sand and made soil by the pushing of their wee wiry roots and then by the rotting of their green bodies, and I understand that lichens allowed mosses room; mosses allowed herbs, herbs shrubs, and shrubs fir and pine, poplar, birch and spruce. That was the long creation of my country, and it is older than any city, every city, and sometimes when squirming between its boughs or marching over its rock which was born with all the world's first rock, I sing or gabble or bound, only because I am there with the trees and cold and rain-storms.

In my country when a lake has no stream roiling it, filling it or taking from it, the birches and firs, pine, spruce and poplar, with other plants like tamarack, alder, sweetgale or ninebark all cause the lake to wither. Wood and foliage dribble into the lake without rest, and the muck piles closer and closer to the lake's top while lilies, calla and rushes move out to feed themselves out of the muck. The lake is to be soil, yet

low soil where water stays, and small trees like the black spruce and tamarack, shrubs like Labrador tea, bog rosemary and arborvitae arise and grow thin and tipping over. Insects enjoy the sunken place with its wet air, birds hunt the insects, and hawks take birds. Frogs chirp in the pools, and I can come too.

I was told that the swamp is a lively spot, and I bring a book that pictures the plants of my country. I have been lying down. This is the sundew in front of my lips; here are the sweet beads of gum which the insects taste and stick to. With my thorough book I have met the sundew whose neighbors are pitcher plants, drowning insects with leafy pitchers of rain. I am jumping up and grinning. I am focused on the cobalt sky with its broken little yellow clouds; and I am certain that God has his warm palm on me, the sundew and the pitcher plant.

Many times, anywhere, I know nothing. I cry. There are no curving cliffs with gashes whose making I understand, no rubbish tumbling into a lake, about which I can predict: tomorrow—a bog. I forget sundew and pitcher plants hiding by the soil, catching insects while photosynthesis occurs on every side.

I want, above all, a gale, a snow curtain and ranting water, accompanied by a thunder—"You are important!"